DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 238 172 EA 016 270

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TITLE A Study Concerning Perceptions of Public School Teachers and Principals Regarding Curriculum Issues in Middle Tennessee.
PUB DATE 16 Nov 83
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (12th, Nashville, TN, November 16, 1983).
PUB TYPE Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; *Attitude Measures; *Curriculum Development; Curriculum Evaluation; Educational Philosophy; Elementary Secondary Education; Opinions; Questionnaires; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Chi Square; Statistical Package for the Social Sciences; *Tennessee

ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to compare the attitudes of 250 teachers, 25 principals, and 35 central office personnel from 20 middle Tennessee counties toward curricular issues. Respondents answered 29 questions on a scale of "strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree" to generate data in 7 categories of issues: curriculum development, course content, school environment, individualized instruction, philosophical parameters, student evaluation, and extracurricular activities. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyze the data, while the Chi Square technique was used to determine the level of significance. Both the teachers and administrators agreed that course content should be decided by teachers, that curriculum development is a cooperative responsibility, that grades should be based on a combination of effort and achievement, that each child should develop a marketable skill, and that strict discipline is essential to learning. Moreover, with minor exceptions, there was general agreement between teachers and principals in all seven categories. (TE)

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A STUDY CONCERNING PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS REGARDING CURRICULUM ISSUES IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

A Research Paper Presented at the
Twelfth Annual Meeting of the
Mid-South Educational Research Association in
Nashville, Tennessee, November 16, 1983

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EA 016 270

A STUDY CONCERNING PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS REGARDING CURRICULUM ISSUES IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Introduction

Curriculum development is a local school system responsibility as defined by the regulations of the Tennessee State Board of Education. Each school system usually has a curriculum committee designated to manage the curriculum development and implementation process. However, all teachers and administrators generally have an opportunity for input and participation in matters pertaining to curriculum. Therefore, the perceptions held by teachers and principals regarding curriculum issues are important to the success of the school system.

Statement of the Problem

This study consisted of determining and comparing the perceptions of local public school system teachers, principals, and central office personnel in twenty Middle Tennessee Counties concerning various curriculum issues.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it measured and compared the perceptions of local public school teachers and principals regarding a variety of curriculum issues. These groups were directly involved in the planning and subsequent implementation of local school curricula. Consequently, the perceptions held by teachers and principals, in large measure, determine what occurs in school classrooms.

The findings of this study will be helpful in curriculum planning, implementation and interpreting school programs to the public.

Research Procedure

An instrument was developed to determine the perceptions of public school teachers and principals concerning selected curricular issues in seven categories: curriculum development, course content, school environment, individualized instruction, philosophical parameters, student evaluation, and extracurricular activities.

Questionnaires were administered to 250 teachers, 25 principals, and 35 central office personnel. The "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences" was used to analyze the data. The Chi Square technique was used to determine the level of significance of the data.

Analysis of the Data

An item by item analysis of the data follows:

Item Number 1. Course content should be decided by the teacher who is teaching the class.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	21 17.5%	21 19.8%	2 22.2%	3 11.5%	47 18.0%
Agree	60 50.0%	56 52.8%	6 66.7%	12 46.2%	134 51.3%
Disagree	32 26.7%	27 25.5%	1 11.1%	9 34.6%	69 26.4%

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Disagree	7	2	0	2	11
	5.8%	1.9%	0.0%	7.7%	4.2%

Significance = 0.7127 Not Significant at the .05 level

All groups favored the concept that course content should be decided by the teacher responsible for teaching the class.

Item Number 2. Homework is necessary for a good instructional program.

Str Agree	23	31	3	2	59
	18.9%	29.8%	33.3%	7.1%	22.4%
Agree	45	47	5	17	114
	36.9%	45.2%	55.6%	60.7%	43.3%
Disagree	46	20	1	9	76
	37.7%	19.2%	11.1%	32.1%	28.9%
Str Disagree	8	6	0	0	14
	6.6%	5.8%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%

Significance = 0.0167 Significant at the .05 level

Most principals agreed that homework was necessary. However, teachers' reactions were mixed between agreement and disagreement on this question.

Item Number 3. The main purpose of schools is to teach the basic skills.

Str Agree	40	10	3	4	57
	32.8%	9.6%	33.3%	14.3%	21.7%
Agree	64	44	3	21	132
	52.5%	42.3%	33.3%	75.0%	50.2%
Disagree	17	42	3	3	65
	13.9%	40.4%	33.3%	10.7%	24.7%
Str Disagree	1	8	0	0	9
	0.8%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%

Significance = 0.0000 Significant at the .05 level

There was general agreement that the main purpose of schools is to teach the basic skills. It should be noted that 48.1 of the secondary teachers (7-12) disagreed.

Item Number 4. Every teacher should provide individualized instruction for all his/her students.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	22 17.9%	7 6.6%	2 22.2%	4 14.3%	35 13.2%
Agree	59 48.0%	48 45.3%	6 66.7%	20 71.4%	133 50.0%
Disagree	35 28.5%	31 29.2%	1 11.1%	4 14.3%	71 26.7%
Str Disagree	7 5.7%	20 18.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	27 10.2%

Significance = 0.0018 Significant at the .05 level

Some 90 percent of the principals and 86 percent of other administrators agreed that teachers should provide individualized instruction. The teachers' perceptions were mixed.

Item Number 5. The best way to develop curriculum is to establish goals and objectives-and then select books, materials and teaching strategies that will be effective in the realization of those goals.

Str Agree	56 45.9%	28 26.9%	4 44.4%	12 42.9%	100 38.0%
Agree	59 47.5%	68 65.4%	4 44.4%	15 53.6%	145 55.1%
Disagree	8 6.6%	7 6.7%	1 11.1%	1 3.6%	17 6.5%
Str Disagree	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 0.4%

Significance = 0.2561 Not Significant at the .05 level

All were in general agreement that curriculum goals and objectives should be established.

Item Number 6. Career Awareness should be a component part of <u>every</u> course of study.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	14	18	2	3	37
	11.5%	17.0%	22.2%	10.7%	14.0%
Agree	63	51	5	19	138
	51.6%	48.1%	55.6%	67.9%	52.1%
Disagree	41	29	2	6	78
	33.6%	27.4%	22.2%	21.4%	29.4%
Str Disagree	4	8	0	0	12
	3.3%	7.5%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%

Significance = 0.3975 Not Significant at the .05 level

The reaction was mixed on this issue.

Item Number 7. Course content should be determined jointly by the teacher and students.

Str Agree	4	3	0	0	7
	3.2%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%
Agree	49	21	3	5	78
	39.5%	20.4%	33.3%	17.9%	29.5%
Disagree	62	67	5	20	154
	50.0%	65.0%	55.6%	71.4%	58.3%
Str Disagree	9	12	1	3	25
	7.3%	11.7%	11.1%	10.7%	9.5%

Significance = 0.1245 Not Significant at the .05 level

As a general rule the reaction was negative regarding the concept that course content should be jointly developed by teachers and students.

Item Number 8. A high school diploma should only be given to those who have passed the state mandated proficiency test.

Str Agree	40	34	1	9	84
	32.8%	32.4%	11.1%	32.1%	31.8%
Agree	46	38	3	14	101
	37.7%	36.2%	33.3%	50.0%	38.3%

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Disagree	32	26	5	2	65
	26.2%	24.8%	55.6%	7.1%	24.6%
Str Disagree	4	7	0	3	14
	3.3%	6.7%	0.0%	10.7%	5.3%

Significance = 0.1677 Not Significant at the .05 level

Most principals did not support the required proficiency test. The teachers who responded were basicly in agreement.

Item Number 9. In elementary schools (K-6), self-contianed classrooms are more effective than departmentalization.

Str Agree	41	27	4	8	80
	34.2%	26.5%	44.4%	29.6%	31.0%
Agree	41	58	5	12	116
	34.2%	56.9%	55.6%	44.4%	45.0%
Disagree	29	16	0	4	49
	24.2%	15.7%	0.0%	14.8%	19.0%
Str Disagree	9	1	0	3	13
	7.5%	1.0%	0.0%	11.1%	5.0%

Significance = 0.0206 Significant at the .05 level

All respondents agreed that a self-contained classroom (K-6) is most effective.

Item Number 10. The most important role of the principal is his/her leadership in curriculum.

Str Agree	13	7	3	3	26
	10.7%	6.8%	33.3%	11.1%	10.0%
Agree	45	34	3	13	95
	36.9%	33.0%	33.3%	48.1%	36.4%
Disagree	53	54	3	10	120
	43.4%	52.4%	33.3%	37.0%	48.0%
Str Disagree	11	8	0	1	20
	9.0%	7.8%	0.0%	3.7%	7.7%

Significance = 0.2850 Not Significant at the .05 level

Over 50 percent of the teachers did not believe that the principals' most important role was curriculum leader. The principals agreed with this concept.

Item Number 11. A strong athletic program is essential in the total educational development of many students.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	7 5.7%	12 11.4%	1 11.1%	3 10.7%	23 8.7%
Agree	44 35.8%	37 35.2%	1 11.1%	15 53.6%	97 36.6%
Disagree	60 48.8%	43 41.0%	6 66.7%	7 25.0%	116 43.8%
Str Disagree	12 9.8%	13 12.4%	1 11.1%	3 10.7%	29 10.9%

Significance = 0.2870 Not Significant at the .05 level

All respondents disagreed that athletics are essential.

Item Number 12. Curriculum development is the joint responsibility of every teacher, supervisor and administrator.

Str Agree	54 43.5%	29 27.4%	4 44.4%	11 40.7%	98 36.8%
Agree	64 51.6%	69 65.1%	5 55.6%	14 51.9%	152 57.1%
Disagree	5 4.0%	8 7.5%	0 0.0%	2 7.4%	15 5.6%
Str Disagree	1 0.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 0.4%

Significance = 0.4029 Not Significant at the .05 level

All agreed that curriculum development is a mutual responsibility.

Item Number 13. Ability grouping is the most efficient and effective means for individualizing instruction.

Str Agree	27 22.1%	15 14.7%	2 22.2%	3 10.7%	47 19.0%

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Agree	59	63	5	20	147
	48.4%	61.8%	55.6%	71.4%	56.3%
Disagree	32	24	2	5	63
	26.2%	23.5%	22.2%	17.9%	24.1%
Str Disagree	4	0	0	0	4
	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%

Significance = 0.2760 Not Significant at the .05 level

All supported ability grouping.

Item Number 14. The goal of education should be to enable each child to develop a marketable skill by the end of high school.

Str Agree	29	15	3	6	53
	23.6%	14.3%	33.3%	25.0%	20.3%
Agree	68	58	2	11	139
	55.3%	55.2%	22.2%	45.8%	53.3%
Disagree	21	27	3	7	58
	17.1%	25.7%	33.3%	29.2%	22.2%
Str Disagree	5	5	1	0	11
	4.1%	4.8%	11.1%	0.0%	4.2%

Significance = 0.2926 Not Significant at the .05 level

All teachers and a slight majority of principals agreed.

Item Number 15. Schools have the responsibility for the social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development of students.

Str Agree	34	24	4	6	68
	27.6%	23.1%	44.4%	21.4%	25.8%
Agree	71	59	4	20	154
	57.7%	56.7%	44.4%	71.4%	58.3%
Disagree	15	19	1	2	37
	12.2%	18.3%	11.1%	7.1%	14.0%
Str Disagree	3	2	0	0	5
	2.4%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%

Significance = . 6804 Not Significant at the .05 level

All the respondents were supportive of the idea that education should develop the whole child.

Item Number 16. The best teaching takes place when teachers work as teams.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	16 13.2%	7 6.7%	3 33.3%	2 7.1%	28 10.7%
Agree	55 45.5%	31 29.8%	4 44.4%	17 60.7%	107 40.8%
Disagree	46 38.0%	60 57.7%	2 22.2%	8 28.6%	116 44.3%
Str Disagree	4 3.3%	6 5.8%	0 0.0%	1 3.6%	11 4.2%

Significance = 0.0075 Significant at the .05 level

All except secondary teachers were supportive of the team concept.

Item Number 17. Students should be taught that individuals representing all cultural, economic, and racial backgrounds have made important contributions to the growth and development of this country.

Str Agree	51 41.5%	37 35.9%	2 22.2%	12 42.9%	102 39.9%
Agree	69 55.3%	60 58.3%	7 77.8%	16 57.1%	151 57.4%
Disagree	4 3.3%	5 4.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	9 3.4%
Str Disagree	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 0.4%

Significance = 0.7976 Not Significant at the .05 level

All respondents believed that students should have multicultural experiences.

Item Number 18. Art and music are as important to the development of the student as other academic areas.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	39	17	0	5	61
	31.7%	16.3%	0.0%	17.9%	23.1%
Agree	60	42	5	16	123
	48.8%	40.4%	55.6%	57.1%	46.6%
Disagree	21	39	3	7	70
	17.1%	37.5%	33.3%	25.0%	26.5%
Str Disagree	3	6	1	0	10
	2.4%	5.8%	11.1%	0.0%	3.8%

Significance = 0.0058 Significant at the .05 level

All agreed as the table above indicates.

Item Number 19. Course content should be determined by a written course of study that is adhered to by every teacher in the system.

Str Agree	21	6	3	3	33
	17.9%	5.7%	33.3%	11.1%	12.7%
Agree	60	53	6	16	135
	51.3%	50.0%	66.7%	59.3%	52.1%
Disagree	29	31	0	8	68
	24.8%	29.2%	0.0%	29.6%	26.3%
Str Disagree	7	16	0	0	23
	6.0%	15.1%	0.0%	0.0%	8.9%

Significance = 0.0080 Significant at the .05 level

Sixty-nine and two tenths percent of the elementary teachers and 55.7 percent of the secondary teachers agreed that curriculum guides were important. All the principals agreed.

Item Number 20. Teachers have the responsibility for providing input into the total educational program within a school system.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	47	28	6	9	90
	37.9%	26.7%	66.7%	32.1%	33.8%
Agree	72	74	3	19	167
	58.1%	70.5%	33.3%	64.3%	62.8%
Disagree	5	3	0	0	8
	4.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%
Str Disagree	0	0	0	1	1
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%	0.4%

Significance = 0.0372 Significant at the .05 level

All respondents agreed.

Item Number 21. Strict discipline creates a good environment for learning.

Str Agree	32	34	3	7	76
	26.2%	32.4%	33.3%	25.0%	28.8%
Agree	69	58	5	15	147
	56.6%	55.2%	55.6%	53.6%	55.7%
Disagree	20	12	0	5	37
	16.4%	11.4%	0.0%	17.9%	14.0%
Str Disagree	1	1	1	1	4
	0.8%	1.0%	11.1%	3.6%	1.5%

Significance = 0.3187 Not Significant at the .05 level

All felt that strict discipline was necessary.

Item Number 22. The most effective way to develop a good curriculum is to review available materials and resources and then develop appropriate learning activities.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	17 14.0%	9 8.7%	1 11.1%	3 10.7%	30 11.5%
Agree	68 56.2%	61 59.2%	7 77.8%	15 53.6%	151 57.9%
Disagree	32 26.4%	31 30.1%	0 0.0%	9 32.1%	72 27.6%
Str Disagree	4 3.3%	2 1.9%	1 11.1%	1 3.6%	8 3.1%

Significance = 0.5813 Not Significant at the .05 level

A majority agreed.

Item Number 23. Content is more effective when students are helped to see the relationship a subject has with other subject areas.

Str Agree	32 26.4%	25 23.8%	3 33.3%	5 17.9%	65 24.7%
Agree	85 70.2%	74 70.5%	6 66.7%	22 78.6%	187 71.1%
Disagree	4 3.3%	5 4.9%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	9 3.4%
Str Disagree	0 0.0%	1 1.0%	0 0.0%	1 3.6%	2 0.8%

Significance = 0.6352 Not Significant at the .05 level

A majority agreed.

Item Number 24. The curriculum should be designed to meet the needs of children of varied exceptionalities.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	36	29	1	9	75
	29.5%	27.4%	11.1%	32.1%	28.3%
Agree	81	71	7	19	178
	68.4%	67.0%	77.8%	67.9%	67.2%
Disagree	5	6	1	0	12
	4.1%	5.7%	11.1%	0.0%	4.5%

Significance = 0.7000 Not Significant at the .05 level

There was strong agreement among all groups that the curriculum should be designed to meet the needs of exceptional children.

Item Number 25. A student should not be promoted to a higher grade until he/she has mastered the requirements of their present grade.

Str Agree	51	50	3	5	109
	42.1%	48.1%	33.3%	18.5%	41.8%
Agree	43	45	5	15	108
	35.5%	43.3%	55.6%	55.6%	41.4%
Disagree	23	7	1	6	37
	19.0%	6.7%	11.1%	22.2%	14.2%
Str Disagree	4	2	0	1	7
	3.3%	1.9%	0.0%	3.7%	2.7%

Significance = 0.0765 Not Significant at the .05 level

All groups agreed.

Item Number 26. Grades should be based entirely on achievement rather than a combination of effort and achievement.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	5 4.1%	6 5.7%	0 0.0%	1 3.6%	12 4.5%
Agree	27 22.1%	31 29.2%	2 22.2%	5 17.9%	65 24.5%
Disagree	77 63.1%	56 52.8%	6 66.7%	21 75.0%	160 60.4%
Str Disagree	13 10.7%	13 12.3%	1 11.1%	1 3.6%	28 10.6%

Significance = 0.7014 Not Significant at the .05 level

All groups were of the opinion that grades should be based on effort and achievement rather than achievement alone.

Item Number 27. A system-wide diagnostic testing program would improve the curriculum.

Str Agree	19 15.8%	8 7.7%	0 0.0%	4 14.3%	31 11.9%
Agree	66 55.0%	62 59.6%	7 77.8%	18 64.3%	153 58.6%
Disagree	29 23.3%	29 27.9%	1 11.1%	5 17.9%	63 24.1%
Str Disagree	7 5.8%	5 4.8%	1 11.1%	1 3.6%	14 5.4%

Significance = 0.5461 Not Significant at the .05 level

A large majority concluded that a diagnostic testing program would improve the curriculum.

Item Number 28. Media and related materials are necessary to support an effective curriculum.

	Teacher K-6	Teacher 7-12	Principal	Central Office	Total
Str Agree	33	15	0	8	56
	26.8%	14.4%	0.0%	28.6%	21.2%
Agree	78	75	8	18	179
	63.4%	72.1%	88.9%	64.3%	67.9%
Disagree	9	14	1	2	26
	7.3%	13.5%	11.1%	7.1%	9.8%
Str Disagree	3	0	0	0	3
	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%

Significance = 0.1280 Not Significant at the .05 level

A sizable majority reported that media and related materials are necessary for an effective curriculum.

Item Number 29. Vocational-technical education should be coordinated with the total school program.

Str Agree	35	27	4	9	75
	28.5%	26.0%	44.4%	32.1%	28.4%
Agree	84	72	5	17	178
	68.3%	69.2%	55.6%	60.7%	67.4%
Disagree	4	5	0	2	11
	3.3%	4.8%	0.0%	7.1%	4.2%

Significance = 0.8175 Not Significant at the .05 level

Almost all respondents agreed that vocational-technical education should be coordinated with the total school program.

Summary of the Results

There was agreement by both the teachers and principals that course content should be decided by the teachers. Curriculum development is the cooperative responsibility of teachers and administrators. The groups did not believe that grades should be based entirely on achievement. The groups agreed that each child should develop a marketable skill before leaving school. There was agreement that strict discipline created a good learning environment.

The results of the study indicate that there is general agreement between the teachers and principals on the seven categories of curriculum issues. The findings should provide data which will enhance curriculum planning and create an environment for effective curriculum decision making.